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DiZoglio Exposes Welfare Fraud

Massachusetts State Auditor Diana DiZoglio of Methuen has only been on the job for two months and has already identified and exposed $2.7M in Welfare Fraud.

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VALLEY PATRIOT OF THE MONTH

US Marine, Purple Heart Recipient, Lawrence's Daniel Cotnoir

John Cuddy
VALLEY PATRIOT HERO REPORTER

The president of Edgar J. Racicot Funeral Home, formerly in Lawrence Massachusetts, now operating in Dracut, Massachusetts, is Lawrence native and US Marine Veteran, Daniel Cotnoir. Operating since 1899, Racicot Funeral is one of the oldest businesses in continual operation in the Merrimack Valley. Although US Marine Dan Cotnoir, was featured once before in the Valley Patriot, reader feedback from last month's article on US Navy Seabee, turned Chelsea Firefighter, turned President of Broco Oil, Robert Brown, inspired seeking out of another small business owner, in the Merrimack Valley, who is also a US Military Veteran. The Valley Patriot featured in October of 2022, US Navy SEAL and entrepreneur, owner of Battle Grounds Coffee, Salvatore DeFranco, discussing his service, entry into business, run for political office, and of course, his love of coffee. This is the third of hopefully many, articles on Veterans in the Merrimack Valley, who own and operate unique small businesses.

Dan's father David's journey into the Funeral Home business, was quite accidental. Working as a custodian at a paper mill in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, when he was offered additional work, cleaning a local funeral parlor. This led to, the funeral parlor owner asking him one day, "do you own a suit?"

Pressed into service as a greeter at the funeral home for wakes and funerals, led David Cotnoir down a twisted path towards a career in funeral service. Raised in a home above the Racicot Funeral parlor, led his son, Dan Cotnoir down a more direct path into the career.

Originally joining the US Marines as Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) 2111 Small Arms Repairer and Technician, later serving as a MOS 8551 Martial Arts Instructor. While in the process of deploying for Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2004, with the US Marine Corp Expeditionary Force, a US Marine Corp Chief Warrant Officer discovered that Dan was a licensed

funeral director. An impromptu meeting was held, and the US Marine Corp designated Dan with MOS 9051 Graves Registration Specialist. Dan spoke with great pride, on the US Marine tradition of "no Marine being left behind" and served with pride, setting up a large in theater mortuary for handling allied casualties. While serving in Iraq, Dan was wounded, and received the Purple Heart from the US Marine Corp.

Asking Dan about the day to day operations at the funeral home, he said that his wife Lori is indispensable in keeping the business side of the

HERO: PAGE 23

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Salisbury Town Manager Neil Harrington Needs to Step Down

It is clear that Salisbury Town Manager Neil Harrington has completely checked out on the people of Salisbury as he trapses all over the City of Salem, Massachusetts running for mayor.

And that may be a good thing for the people of Salisbury.

The man who approved and pushed a tax-payer funded "boardwalk to nowhere" and gave cushy construction contracts to political insiders, is also the same guy who had to be ordered by the Secretary of State to turn over public documents to the press.

Even after being called on the carpet by State Senator Katy Ives, and promising her he would release financial documents from the town, Harrington continued to conceal the public records and stonewall the press about his suspicious spending habits.

Now, our Valley Patriot researchers have unearthed documents showing that Harrington has not filed state-mandated Annual Town Reports from fiscal years 2002 through 2007, and also failed to file Annual Town Reports from 2016 to 2022.

This is not only a violation of town charter; it's a violation of state law.

Every other town manager in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has to do an annual town financial report. But, not Neil Harrington. Neil doesn't have to do mandated town reports because nobody holds him accountable.

He has, and has always had, his own personal bobbleheads on the Board of Selectmen to do his bidding and look the other way when he doesn't do his job.

In fact, the years that Harrington actually DID do the Annual Town Reports (2012 to 2015), he only did them because the Valley Patriot filed complaints with Secretary of State Galvin's office and was forced to release them. That is, after claiming they were not public records, then illegally redacting information when he did release the records, prompting another scolding by Secretary Galvin's office.

The fact is, a town manager in Massachusetts has very few job duties that are required by law and town charter. The mandated Annual Town Reports are among those duties, and Neil Harrington hasn't even bothered to do them.

We believe that Salisbury Town Manager Neil Harrington's actions, (or inactions as it were) show that he has zero interest in serving the people of Salisbury or even doing the basic day to day tasks of being a town manager.

As such, Neil Harrington needs to step down and concentrate on doing what he loves the most - talking about himself on the campaign trail in Salem.

The people of Salisbury deserve a full-time town manager who will do the Annual Town Reports, be transparent about public spending, and spend his time working for the people of Salisbury, not Salem, Massachusetts.

The bobbleheads on the Board of Selectmen may not tell you this, but the man for that job is no longer Neil Harrington. ◊

IN YOUR CORNER with AUDITOR DIZOGLIO

DiZoglio Exposes Welfare Fraud in her First Months

Auditor DiZoglio's Bureau of Special Investigations Unit Identifies over $2.7 Million in Public Benefit Fraud

Hello Valley Patriot Readers,

It's been an exciting first few weeks in office as our team of auditors work diligently on wrapping up audits, while we also set the wheels in motion to initiate new ones that pertain to campaign initiatives.

In February, my office's Bureau of Special Investigations (BSI) released its second quarter report, which is my first report released since taking office a month ago. This report found evidence totaling $2,710,499.81 in fraudulently obtained public assistance benefits and services.

During quarter two of fiscal year 2023, BSI conducted a total of 1,135 cases. Of those cases, 255 were completed with public assistance fraud identified.

The work of BSI fraud examiners ensures taxpayer dollars are used legally to fund Massachusetts' public benefits programs, and that those programs are accessible to the residents they are intended to truly receive them. These programs are essential in protecting families and our economy's workforce.

Under state law, the BSI's investigative authority extends to any assistance program administered by the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Division of Medical Assistance, which administers MassHealth (the state's Medicaid program). Although the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) is not included in the BSI statute, BSI also works with EEC through a Memorandum of Understanding.

These programs serve an important role in supporting individuals and families across Massachusetts. This is why I am grateful for the BSI fraud examiners and their dedication to ensuring a more responsible, accountable, and transparent government for those who depend on these programs and services.

As a result of BSI's investigations, public assistance fraud cases are referred to agencies for administrative action, fraudulent overpayments are recovered through civil agreements, individuals are disqualified from programs for specified periods of time, and cases are prosecuted in state and federal courts.

If you would like to learn more, please visit www.mass.gov/orgs/bureau-of-special-investigations.

My office will continue to conduct these important audits and reports to identify waste, fraud and abuse to protect your hard-earned tax dollars.

As always, feel free to contact me anytime via email at auditor@sao.state.ma.us or by phone at (617) 727-2075. If you're ever at the State House, I hope you'll stop by and visit our team in room 230!

Yours in service,

Diana ◊

What Ever Happened to Justice?

As a direct result of their determined and exhaustive efforts over the past two decades, the Tomaselli sisters, Joyce and Gracemarie, have petitioned two new bills to the current State Senate.

They learned that absolute immunity given to attorneys is a privilege presently in effect that makes it virtually impossible for litigants to obtain fair and equitable treatment in court.

When I found out that this is true, I thought - are you kidding - no one should be above the law! What ever happened to liberty and justice for all???

Too few people realize that the present attorney absolute immunity privilege allows attorneys to unfairly bend the law in a court proceeding. It is so unfair and detrimental to any and all who have legitimate claims that must be determined in court.

This immunity is not justice by any measure!

Please folks if you agree that absolute immunity is wrong, unfair, or unjust, just speak up, lend a hand if you want the legal system to change for the better. Contact your Senators and Representatives and ask them to support and pass these bills: SD 1941 An Act to strengthen rules governing attorney conduct; penalties for misconduct and SD 2069 An Act to provide clarification to Mass General Laws.

The Tomasellis are my good friends, they have always been good, strong and loving contributors to the community. Let's all get together and work for justice for a brighter future.

Thanks,

Joe Corcoran,

U.S. Navy veteran 1954 to 1958

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SEE OUR COUPON ON PAGE 22

State Budget Includes Critical Investments

Ryan Hamilton
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Much has happened on Beacon Hill since my last column. We passed a supplemental budget for this current fiscal year. This budget included critical investments such as;

* 68 million in Early Education and Care workforce stabilization grants
* 65 million for school breakfasts
* 44.9 million in emergency shelter program
* 130 million in continuation of SNAP benefits
* 2 million in reimbursements for stolen SNAP benefits
* 104 million in the MA Clean Water Trust
* 400 Million in MassWorks infrastructure program
* 9.3 million in the MA Broadband Fund.

These investments will help the working and middle-class families of the Merrimack Valley. They insure that our programs will continue to be funded through the end of the fiscal year. As we get closer to the budget, I encourage you to contact me at ryan.hamilton@mahouse.gov to inform me of your priorities for Methuen and Haverhill.

Now I will highlight a piece of legislation I filed this session. This specific legislation is HD2893, an Act relative to expanding property tax exemptions for veterans. The current law states that only disabled veterans can get exemptions on their property taxes. This will stay in place. The goal of my legislation is to expand that to include all veterans as defined in clause forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4. If passed, every non-disabled veteran residing in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts would be eligible for a $400 property tax exemption.

Ryan Hamilton is a former Methuen City Councilor and is in his first year of his first term as a State Rep. for the communities of Methuen and Haverhill. You can email him at Ryan.Hamilton@mahouse.gov. ◊

Gini Kisses Massachusetts Goodbye

Duncan Burns
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Gini has told Massachusetts she's leaving the state for good. Massachusetts Democrats looked at Gini and just shrugged and walked away. Democrats, especially those serving in The Massachusetts Legislature, as well as Congress, never really liked Gini anyways.

Why do you ask?

Maybe because no matter which way you slice things, Gini is always right and never lies. Politicians hate that.

In case you haven't caught on by now, Gini isn't a real person, it's a coefficient that measures income disparity. Of which Massachusetts is just outside of the top five, coming in at number six (6), worst states in the nation for income disparity.

The U.S. Census Bureau came out with an "Income in the United States: 2021" late last year, and it's no wonder local & state media left it alone. It shows the overwhelming populace of the country is drowning, mostly due to inflation, including the results of the Orwellian Policies of COVID. This is after 11 years of Federal Reserve Monetary Policy that enrich the wealthiest of this nation via Quantitative Easing (QE).

During this epic run, the wealthy, and those who could navigate our markets, things couldn't get any better. This includes the politicians you elected and have a say in those policies. Just look at Senator Elizabeth Warren's or Representative Katherine Clark's portfolios.

For nearly two (2) years, from 2020 to 2022, Congress passed The American Rescue Plan and The Inflation Reduction Act, the latter of course did absolutely nothing to reduce inflation.

The totals were roughly $7 trillion in the 2-year time span, which resulted in a decades high of 9.1% CPI print in June of last year. Of course politicians took victory laps, The Third District's own U.S. Representative Lori Trahan continues to take victory laps of lowering the price of a few drugs. Meanwhile, those in the bottom income percentiles continue to be impoverished from the inflation the spending caused. Their answer? More spending. Made only worse with The Fed raising interest rates because they must destroy in order to attempt to fix what they did.

Maura Healey just released her $55.5 billion dollar budget this week, which isn't going to help anyone.

Why?

Because the inflation caused by massive spending (both state and federal) is regressive, which means it impacts everyone except the truly wealthy, but hits harder upon the poor. Massachusetts already has the 3rd worst state budget in the nation, so where's the improvement? More spending to "help"?

The median household income in Massachusetts for 2021 was $86,566, down from the 2019 high of $87,707. When adjusted for CPI (nationally), earners must make $211K just to be in the top tenth percentile, which means everyone else is falling behind.

Neither state or federal politicians in Massachusetts will take responsibility for what they're doing to this state & country, because you know, government knows best. Why would they?

They're either already wealthy, or in Beacon Hill's case, they simply vote themselves yet another raise. GOP in other states aren't absolved from blame either, they voted for insane spending as well. Most of the monies go to their donors & corporate hack beneficiaries. Most of you got bought off for some chump-change "stimi-checks".

How's that working out now?

Apparently great, because Massachusetts now leads the country in flight out of the state. For those stuck here, especially the bottom 50th income percentiles, when all you have left to eat is cake, you need only look in the mirror as to why that's all there is. You voted for it, and it isn't going to get better, no matter what these politicians tell you...They lie for a living. ◊

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Leading Community Development and Small Businesses

Pavel Payano
STATE SENATOR, 1ST ESSEX DISTRICT

My first two months in office have been busy but incredibly rewarding as my team, and I begin to settle in on Beacon Hill. The 2023-2024 legislative session is officially underway as the Senate and House announced leadership and committee assignments. I am proud to share that I have been appointed as the Chair of the Joint Committee on Community Development and Small Businesses. The Committee oversees and reviews matters related to economic growth, infrastructure improvements, and revitalization efforts at the local level. In the coming months, we will hear from small business leaders, local officials, stakeholders, and residents as we discuss policies and initiatives before the Committee.

On the campaign trail and now in the Senate, one of my top priorities is helping build a robust economy that benefits the residents of Haverhill, Lawrence, and Methuen. As Chair, I am grateful to have the opportunity to work on the ground level with local business leaders and residents alike to identify policy and spending priorities. I also look forward to drawing from my previous experience to facilitate effective public-private partnerships.

I have also been tapped to help lead the Joint Committee on Advanced Information Technology, the Internet, and Cybersecurity as the Senate Vice-Chair. Additionally, I will sit on the Joint Committees on Higher Education, Municipalities and Regional Government, Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets, Cannabis Policy, Public Health, and Public Service.

February was jam-packed with district events and meetings.

I attended the First Church Congregational's 141st Annual George Washington Birthday Dinner. I also gathered alongside local business leaders to discuss my priorities for the session and ways we can collaborate at the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce's Legislative Breakfast.

This month, our constituents celebrated some major milestones. I presented WWII Veteran and Methuen resident Ethel Marguerite LaSalle with a Senate citation to mark her 100th birthday. Over in Lawrence, I met with Juan Bautista, who turned 102. It was an honor to recognize these individuals and their distribution to our community.

My office is officially hosting office hours. You can meet with Team Payano Thursday, March 16th and 30th, from 10 am to 12 pm at the Lawrence Senior Center, Friday, March 31st, from 10 am to 12 pm at the Methuen Senior Center, and Thursday, March 30th, from 4 to 5 pm at MakeIt Haverhill. Starting in April, we will be at the Lawrence and Methuen Senior Centers every Thursday and Friday from 10 am to 12 pm, respectively. We are also working with local organizations and community health centers to expand meeting times for folks who can't join during our current hours. My office can assist with unemployment benefits, MassHealth, housing challenges, RMV issues, and more.

As mentioned in my previous column, please feel free to contact my office with your thoughts on this column, questions about office hours, or any other legislative and district matters. You can reach me via email at Pavel.Payano@masenate.gov or call 617-722-1604. ◊

Local Aid Increases in Governor Healey's First Budget

Adrianne Ramos
STATE REPRESENTATIVE 14TH DIST.

Budget season is officially beginning!

On March 1, Governor Healey released her administration's version of the FY24 budget.

Included in the Governor's budget is a local aid increase of over 8% from FY23.

After speaking with officials from every town in the 14th Essex, it is clear that our municipalities are struggling to make ends meet.

For the first time since its passage the Student Opportunity Act will be fully funded, and Chapter 70 school aid has increased by nearly 10% in this proposed budget.

It's clear that the state is hoping to ease the burden our towns face but there is still more work to be done.

Over the next few weeks, my office will be having further conversations with town and city officials to learn of additional budget needs as we in the House of Representatives begin the budget process.

As we get further into the 193rd General Session, I am looking forward to working through the over 6,000 bills filed in the House of Representatives in my committees.

I have been assigned to 4 committees this term: Children, Families & Persons with Disabilities, Post Audit & Oversight, Tourism, Arts & Cultural Development, and Advanced IT, Internet & Cybersecurity. I am particularly looking forward to serving on the Children, Families & Persons with Disabilities committee as it aligns with my priorities of improving mental health of children and creating a better future for families in the 14th Essex and throughout the Commonwealth.

Before diving into public hearings and committee meetings, my team has been combing through requests to co-sponsor bills. It's been a priority of mine to read through each piece of legislation that comes across my desk, with a particular eye towards requests from constituents within the district.

While I may not co-sponsor every bill sought, it is helpful to understand the priorities of the district and will watch as they make their way through the process. ◊

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Lawrence's Mayor DePeña Presents 2nd State of the City Address: $16M Coming to City of Lawrence

LAWRENCE (February 22, 2023) Mayor Brian A. DePeña gave his 2nd State of the City Address, alongside members of the Lawrence State Delegation, and members of the community.

Mayor DePeña gave an update on the issues facing the City of Lawrence, along with his early priorities and efforts to address them, in remarks given directly to the City Council and to the people of Lawrence.

"I am proud to say that this is an exciting time for Lawrence because of the many great things we have accomplished in just one year. However, there is still much work to be done. I want to thank all the members of the Lawrence City Council, State Representatives, and members of the public for attending my address, said Mayor DePeña."

It is an honor to be with you tonight to share my State of the City address. This is my second speech. Like other cities in the country, we enter this New Year with the highest inflation in 40 years and a senseless war between Russia and Ukraine that makes matters worse.

But I'm not here to talk about how these problems are affecting us. I am here to let you know how my administration will face and overcome our challenges and obstacles to continue raising our city to a higher standard of living.

We, the people of the City of Lawrence, are working diligently to achieve a prosperous, safe, innovative, green, and attractive city not only to live, work and invest in but also to be admired.

Lawrence City Government is committed to delivering quality public services in a timely and competent manner and to working cooperatively with our federal and state legislators, community leaders, stakeholders, and citizens to create a safer and more progressive Lawrence where people can live, work, study, and invest.

We are placing our economic development, public safety, infrastructure, education, fiscal management, government transparency, quality of life, and social justice at the top of our government agenda, to not only embody the belief that all residents should have the opportunity to be part of our new prosperity plan but also serves as a progressive beacon for the Commonwealth and the nation.

The state of our city has never been stronger. Together, we have made Lawrence a safer, healthier, more dynamic, productive, and more inclusive city than it has ever been. This progress is felt in every neighborhood and is recognized throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We are restoring faith in government in many ways by managing taxpayer money wisely, smartly, and responsibly.

We believe in a government that can be trusted. This year of strong fiscal management has helped us earn a perfect " to A+ bond rating. The City's 'free cash reserves as of July 1, 2022, were $43 million, the highest in the city's history. We also reduced $4 million dollars to the deficit that the city had in recent years, which helped us alleviate the costs of the construction increases and investments that the city is making.

Thanks to this positive indicator, we ask the City Council to approve $16 million to invest in the people of Lawrence with the approval of the City Council to improve the quality of life for all our residents.

Ladies and gentlemen, because the people are at the center of my government, we, with the approval of our City Council, are going to take care of our people by investing in our priorities: housing assistance, family services, youth development, infrastructure (streets and sidewalks), energy efficiency, green spaces, immigration services, ESOL classes, early education, public health, senior services, public safety, city employees, and veteran's services.

We have secured appropriate funding and support to help our small businesses and entrepreneurs. Thanks to your support we were able to put up $5 million for a large number of street and sidewalk repairs, parks, and the beautification of the city in a historic way.

At the beginning of our administration, we provided our Police Officers with the largest number of patrol vehicles for surveillance in our city, all equipped with the most up-to-date technology, which allows us to identify any situation while these officers are on duty; furthermore, we have ensured continuous recruitment of new officers all residents of the City of Lawrence.

Lawrence Mayor Brian DePena outllines his top priorities for the City of Lawrence bringing in $16M more in aid to the city

Furthermore, we have made sure to create the necessary conditions for the construction of two New Elementary Schools, these being the most modern to date in the entire Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The construction of a building for the new Police Station positioned itself as one of the most modern and best-equipped in the entire Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Also, the remodeling and lighting of all our parks. We have ordered the largest investment to beautify the entire city, including all its entrances. Repairs to all public parking lots, more equipment for the Department of Public Works, as well as adding more human personnel, to this department.

We have completed the repair of the old roof that the City Hall had, as well as the acquisition of a new elevator. We placed a constituent services aide, during office hours.

Through the efficiency of our tax collection offices, we have managed to make wise investments in all these resources obtained thanks to their efforts.

We have now a favorable contract for the city from recent past months for a new garbage collector company, which has provided excellent service to our constituents.

The placement of new and modern parking meters to provide a solution to the claim of business owners and residents, ensuring more frequent parking in the city.

We will spend these taxes on repairs of streets, sidewalks, and traffic signals in our city.

To accomplish these efforts, I have directed the creation of a special task force to make recommendations for the best use of ARPA funds, now in our free cash.

We're allocating more than $16 million to seven priority categories

- Health and Human Services: $2,900,000
- Art and Culture: $1,000,000
- Parks and Recreation: $1,400,000
- Housing Assistance: $5,674.052
- Economic Development: $5,650,000
- Community Security Initiative: $1,000,000
- Disclosure, Advertising, and Technology: $1,550,000
- HOUSING: $3,174,052

Additionally, we are putting funds into the following:

- Infrastructure (streets, sidewalks): $5,000,000

Building on our strong fiscal management, open government, the support of local, state, and federal elected officials, and the community at large, we will continue to raise our city to a higher standard of living. With this in mind, I assure you that Lawrence will continue to be a great place to live, study, work, and invest.

My fellow Lawrence residents, I would like to take this opportunity to THANK YOU for placing your trust in me. Remember, we are one Lawrence, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.

Thank you, and God bless Lawrence and God bless The United States of America! ◊

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EYE ON DRACUT

Phil Thibault Needs New Hobby in Dracut

By Brian Genest
VALLEY PATRIOT DRACUT COLUMNIST

Dracut's most-rejected perennial candidate—nine-time loser Phil Thibault—has a new hobby: giving voters electoral advice. Jack of all trades, and master of none, Phil Thibault's latest desperate attempt to try to be relevant in town is to trash Dracut, the Board of Selectmen and yours truly in print. As part of his new writing hobby, Phil Thibault is penning the kind of prose that instantly cures insomnia: wicked dull and hilariously sad, just like him.

If you'd take your car to a mechanic who doesn't own any tools or hire a landscaper who killed your tomatoes, Phil Thibault is your go-to guy for local election advice. In addition to losing a race for Housing Authority, Phil Thibault has come up short in eight elections for selectman, so far, in 2005, 2007, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2021 and 2022. He's lost electoral contests against all five current selectmen, including three head-to-head matchups against Selectman Joe DiRocco.

Let's put Phil Thibault's electoral history in historical perspective: He's lost as many elections as Hillary Clinton, Stacey Abrams and Beto O'Rourke combined, plus two more. In his own mind, however, that makes Phil Thibault a political guru and fully qualified to tell Dracut voters what to do, apparently.

Meanwhile, one of the main reasons Phil Thibault can't win anything is that he's surrounded himself with some of the most nasty and negative voices in our town, those who constantly try to tear down Dracut.

Here's what the Lowell Sun said when Phil Thibault lost his selectman's race in 2020.

"It just might be that in Thibault's case, familiarity breeds more contempt than content.

Buoyed by the backing of several town influencers – including former selectmen – one would have thought it was his election to lose, which he did.

It could also be payback for the decision by that screening panel he ran not to put interim – now permanent – Town Manager Ann Vandal on the list of finalists for that position."

It wasn't Phil Thibault's job to fire the interim town manager and that's exactly what he tried to do by not including Vandal on the short list. Thankfully, Phil Thibault wasn't ultimately involved in the final hiring decision back in 2020 because selectmen scrapped the tarnished search process, got rid of him and kept Vandal.

You have to wonder how much political capital, time, money and effort Phil Thibault's friends are going to keep wasting on a guy who continues to lose and lose and lose and lose and lose and lose and lose and lose and lose. Will they support him again if he runs for a 10th time? At this point, Phil Thibault's not just the likely loser in every contest, he's the proven loser and proven to be Dracut's biggest loser.

One of the other reasons Phil Thibault continues to lose is he spews toxicity about our town, elected officials, private citizens, and business owners on his bestie John Zimini's unwatchable cable TV show, a local version of Wayne's World with a similar level of maturity and cast of characters. During the 2022 town election, Phil Thibault was calling Dracut sleepy. In 2021, Phil Thibault said our town was starting to rot.

He's not an inspiring candidate, to say the least, and Phil Thibault has little to offer to the voters. Plus, why would voters want to elect a guy who hates our town so much? Thankfully, Dracut isn't buying what Phil Thibault has been selling. In fact, voters keep sending him the same message—"thanks, but no thanks"—but Phil Thibault doesn't want to hear it, apparently.

Regardless, Phil Thibault thinks he's the smartest guy in the room, no matter who's in the room. Just ask him. Speaking of which, Phil Thibault always wants to be in the room, apparently. He's been lurking around town government for decades, keeping the seats warm on a bunch of town boards. If you've gotten Phil Thibault's self-centered political mailings throughout the years, you've seen the extensive list, but not a single accomplishment or new idea to benefit Dracut listed. Like George Costanza, Phil Thibault can't wait to tell anyone who will listen that he's an architect. It's all about him. You'd be hard pressed to meet a more self-absorbed politician; the thing Phil Thibault likes to talk about the most is himself.

When there's an opening on any town board these days, Phil Thibault rushes his application over to town hall right away. In a town of 34,000 people, Phil Thibault always thinks he's the most qualified person for the

GENEST: PAGE 12

The Envelope Please

Philippe Thibault
VALLEY PATRIOT GUEST COLUMNIST

There is a lot to be said for volunteerism within a community. There are many reasons to give such service to a community and your neighbors ranging from philanthropic to profit. Benjamin Franklin once proclaimed, "a person can do well by doing good." A contemporary of Franklin is Dracut's own Joseph Bradley Varnum. An amazing man with an equally amazing story that does not receive the recognition in Dracut as it should. He gets dusted off once a year for the Varnum Award for a resident who exemplifies the characteristics of its namesake. The award also highlights one of Dracut's political shortcomings: the Dracut politic does not always treat its history or residents well. Rebecca Duda a local historian authored a book in 2014 titled "Legendary Locals of Dracut". There are scores of people in this book that deserve the accolades of a Varnum Award and there are scores since that publication that are equally qualified nominees.

The politics of Dracut are a hinderance to the task at hand, volunteerism. Many know Dracut politics to be "blood sport." Somewhere in this edition I am probably getting roasted. Recently someone posing as myself called into WCAP, the local radio station, to make an announcement of the passing of Mr. John Zimini. John is a dear friend, former selectman, and staunch advocate for the community; and that will put him at odds with the status quo, good ole boys' network in town. I was happy to clarify that the "rumors of his death were extremely exaggerated" to paraphrase Twain. Stunts like this make a person looking to participate in local government and the community wonder if it is worth it. I am happy to say that it is worth the effort, the trials, and tribulations. Do not let the negative atmosphere deter you from your positive actions. Volunteer for a board or commission. Take out nomination papers and run for public office. Ours is a government for, by, and of the people.

I have seen the efforts of good intentioned people take this leap of faith into a governmental role. Many are disillusioned by the reception into the process. I have run for multiple offices in the past (unsuccessfully), and I harbor no regrets and I make critical issues known. For that effort I get lampooned. The harassment is not derived for the fall, but from the continued rising. The rising after the fall keeps the opponents accountable for their decisions and actions. If you are rejected by the authority for an appointment to a board or commission, go just the same. These are public meetings, and your presence and participation cannot be denied. Town Meeting in Dracut requires a quorum count of two hundred and fifty persons for the June meeting. Participate fully, get up and speak to matters that have a direct effect on your daily lives. Honestly, your vote for President has lesser impact on your purse than the ninety-million-dollar town budget. Logistically 1 vote in 286,000,000 for the former and 1 vote in 250 for the later.

Joseph Bradley Varnum some two hundred years ago when he fought in the Revolutionary War or was elected to public office including Speaker of the House in Congress did not achieve so that an award would one day be named for him. The betterment of the community, the town, and the country were foremost. Shake off the notion of "What can I do?" but rather say "What can't I do!" JRR Tolkien's Gandalf contemplated in the Hobbit regarding a building storm of doom that "Some believe it is only great power that can hold evil in check, but that is not what I have found. It is the small everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keep the darkness at bay. Small acts of kindness and love."

There are so many unsung heroes in every community and Dracut has anonymous heroes who prefer to go about their charitable work unnoticed. They get my vote for the Varnum Award. They are the ordinary folk who see to it that there is still some good in the world. And if there is still good in the world it is worth fighting for. ◊

KANE'S KORNER

Lawrence High's, JrROTC Jaraliz Morales is Valley Patriot BASH Scholarship Recipient

KANE
VALLEY PATRIOT MASCOT/COLUMNIST

High School Senior Jaraliz Morales will be presented with the Lawrence Junior ROTC Scholarship on March 31st at the Valley Patriot Bash. Kane recognizes Jaraliz as a hard charging individual with a strong work ethic. He believes her mother Arisleidy Alejo modeled hard work in their home and instilled being purposeful and productive as a family value. Arisleidy relocated from the Dominican Republic as a young mother and raised her family in the United States including Jaraliz , her sister, and 4 brothers. Kane only has one sister and wondered what it would be like to be part of a large family.

Jaraliz holds the title of Cadet LTC at the Jr. ROTC program in Lawrence. Kane learned that this is the highest rank in JROTC. In this position she mentors the participating cadets especially the freshman and sophomores and serves as the Battalion Commander of the Lancer Battalion. Kane asked how she originally became interested in JROTC? Jaraliz explained that she knew several of the cadets since her brothers participated in the program. Jaraliz currently has one brother serving in the National Guard and another brother serving in the United States Army.

Like her brothers, she embraced JROTC as an opportunity to spend time with like-minded people, and gain valuable leadership experience. Jaraliz told Kane that she couldn't think of too many organizations that would promote this level of responsibility for someone in her age group. She explained to Kane that her JROTC group functioned very much like a family.

Another area of her life that Jaraliz pushes hard is academics. She embraced the opportunity to attend the Abbott Lawrence Academy program located in Lawrence High School. This specialized academic program allows students to participate in accelerated classes and attend college classes at Merrimack College on campus. Kane thought it was really cool that Jaraliz attended college classes at Merrimack while still in high school. Jaraliz explained that this opportunity has awarded her the opportunity to experience the college campus and academic requirements of a college student.

Jaraliz has applied to a number of local colleges including Merrimack College. She plans to study at a 4 year college. She will enter school as undeclared as she explores classes in the medical field, business field, and law. Jaraliz would like to practice living independently by living away at school.

Besides JROTC , academics, and social time, Jaraliz also plays softball for Lawrence High School. Kane feels Jaraliz is truly a well-rounded individual and would like to invite you to contribute to her Scholarship fund through the Valley Patriot.

If you would like to make a contribution to the Jaraliz Morales Lawrence JROTC Scholarship Fund through the Valley Patriot, these are the ways you may contribute.

Venmo: @Tom-Duggan -10
PayPal - valleypatriot@aol.com
CashAP: $ValleyPatriot
Check to: Valley Patriot Bash
PO Box 453
North Andover, MA 01845
Best regards,
Kane Peaslee, Woof ◊

Long before I ever ran for office I was a loyal reader of The Valley Patriot. As Lawrence City Council President - and now a State Rep. I find it vital to keeping up with what's going on in my district.

Congratulations on hitting **ANOTHER** great milestone, your 19th ANNIVERSARY!

Here's hoping for many more!

HAPPY 19th ANNIVERSARY!
FRANK MORAN
STATE REPRESENTATATIVE

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I Remember how they *Laughed* ....
19 Years and 233 Editions Ago

I REMEMBER SO WELL ...

I remember when the very first edition of The Valley Patriot was delivered to my office in Lawrence City Hall back in 2004. I had never seen anything like it. It was a breath of fresh air for free speech in the Lawrence area! Tom, you and your team have come a long way since those days, you ought to be proud!

I also remember taking my share of criticism in the pages of this newspaper, but it was always fair and never personal. Mostly, I remember when you first unveiled your vision for standards in journalism, how you were laughed at and mocked by the political insiders and the newspaper industry.

CONGRATULATIONS ON GETTING THE LAST LAUGH!

Mike Sullivan

(Then) Lawrence Mayor Mike Sullivan in July of 2005 at the placement of our very first newspaper box on Mt. Vernon St. in Lawrence.

Georges Niang of the Philadelphia 76'ers Donates Signed Jersey, Basketball For BASH Raffles!

Methuen resident Georges Niang of the NBA's Philadelphia 76'ers, has reached out to The Valley Patriot to let us know that he not only reads The Valley Patriot newspaper, but he is a big fan of our anniversary charity BASH, and has donated a signed NBA Jersey and Basketball to benefit our BASH Raffles!

This year's Valley Patriot BASH raffles will go to benefit local activist Keith Wlodyka.

Keith Wlodyka has been laid up the last few months from COVID 19 and has lost tens of thousands of dollars in medical bills and loss revenue from his business "The Daily Dose Cafe" located at Pentucket Medical at Sal's Riverwalk in Lawrence.

The Valley Patriot BASH is being held on Friday, Marh 31st at The Firefighters Relief In, 1 Market St in Lawrence. The program starts at 7pm. You can get tickets on eventbrite.com (search valley patriot). To donate to our scholarships see page 20!

Valley Patriot BASH Committee member Kevin Drouin of Lawrence with the signed 76'ers Georges Niang jersey to be auctioned off at our BASH Raffles March 31st. Tickets available at eventbrite.com

afc URGENT CARE american family care

Why I Support The Valley Patriot and Why You Should Too!

Estela Reyes
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

When I first ran for office years ago I didn't like Tom Duggan and my opinion of The Valley Patriot was not good. This month The Valley Patriot is celebrating their 19th Anniversary and I couldn't be more proud to be a part of it.

Here's why.

I had never met Tom, and never read the paper, but I knew him by reputation, and what people were telling me was that he was a "racist" and "hates the City of Lawrence" because his father was a police officer murdered in our city.

Then I met him.

My first encounter with Tom was when he wrote a column criticizing me.

Months later however, I learned that Tom had continued to research the story and the background details even though it was no longer a public issue.

When he realized something he wrote was inaccurate, Tom sought me out.

That's when I met Tom Duggan for the first time. Tom found out I was at an event one night and randomly showed up to talk to me. I will never forget what he said that day because it made me realize I had him all wrong.

"Councilor, I wrote a story about you a few months ago, and I've come to find out I was wrong about what I wrote, and I am here to say I am really sorry."

Then, he hugged me.

I was shocked, and I remember thinking, 'who is this guy? This can't be the angry, racist, guy I keep hearing about who hates Lawrence.'

Then he surprised me even further saying that his apology wasn't enough, he wanted to do something to atone for his mistake and promised to help me in my next campaign.

That's when I started to really take a look at this newspaper. What I found were stories about people helping the homeless in Lawrence, stories about Lawrence businesses doing good deeds, government services available for the Latino community, and yes, some criticism of Lawrence elected officials.

It was eye opening and refreshing - a newspaper that gives local activists and newsmakers the opportunity to get their message out without the filtered agenda of an editorial board - regardless of what their opinions are.

The more I read the more surprised I was. I read a column from one of his own contributors viscously attacking Tom and his paper. I remember thinking, 'why would he publish that? Why would he let someone attack him like that in the pages of his own newspaper?'

So, I called him and I asked.

He simply said, "the purpose of this newspaper isn't to promote my own views but to give other people a voice. People who hate me in this community deserve a voice too."

This is so rare today - a man who welcomes criticism, eager to get things right, and willing to correct the record when he gets something wrong.

So, when Tom Duggan called and asked me to help The Movement Family (TMF) - a group of volunteers who feed the homeless in Lawrence - I was happy to help.

He came and testified before the council, he worked with myself and the mayor to hammer out the details, and at the end of it all, it was Tom Duggan who helped the homeless have shelter at the bus station on Common St. for homeless dinners once a week.

What's more, he holds an annual charity BASH every year where he raises money for kids in Lawrence,

Methuen, Haverhill, and North Andover. 100% of everything people donate go directly to the kids. Tom posts every donation on-line and publicly posts a running total so everyone can see that their donation is going where it is supposed to go.

At this BASH, Tom even welcomes those who hate him and those who publicly criticize him, because he is single focused on helping kids get money for college. "The more people we have in this room the more we raise for the kids," he said. "So, I don't care if you hate me as long as you are here!"

At last year's event he told the crowd that the BASH was a night of "amnesty." Then he personally thanked several politicians in the room who have done nothing but belittle his efforts and attack his credibility.

"They may not like me but these people are here because they are the grown-ups in the community who are willing to put aside their personal feelings to help other people," he said. Then he put photos of them in the next Valley Patriot to give them free publicity for coming to help.

As a side note, I have seen many politicians exploit Tom. He helps them behind the scenes with their scandals and their campaigns, and then when they get what they want, they turn on him and trash him on social media.

But, Tom doesn't seem to care because he's not a politician. He doesn't look for credit for the things he does, in fact, he often gives other people credit for some of the things he does.

So, yes, I am proud to support Tom and his Valley Patriot, and I encourage you all to put aside what you may have heard, and come to his BASH at the Relief's In on March 31st to see for yourself what this paper is all about.

And for the record, Tom Duggan's help and guidance during the last election is the reason I am a state representative right now.

And it all started with an apology.

Who would have thought? ◊

My Vision for a Resource Centers in Lawrence & Methuen

Francisco Paulino
STATE REP., LAWRENCE/METHUEN

As your State Representative for District 16th, I am committed to working tirelessly to improve the quality of life in our communities.

It is an honor to announce that I have been appointed by Speaker Ron Mariano and his leadership team to serve on several important committees. I look forward to contributing to the House Committee on Federal Stimulus and Census Oversight, House Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security, House Committee on Revenue, and House Committee on Emergency Preparedness and Management.

These committees are critical areas that require strong leadership, collaboration, and dedication to the well-being of our communities. I am excited to work with my colleagues to ensure that we continue to make progress and achieve success in these areas. I want to express my gratitude for the trust that Speaker Mariano and the leadership team have placed in me, and I am ready to get to work.

As your representative, I am committed to creating opportunities and improving the quality of life in our communities. One of my top priorities is education. Education is essential for personal growth and community development, and it is our duty as a community to provide our children with the tools and resources they need to succeed.

With this in mind, I have a plan to assist Janelle Abreu, the Library Director, in reopening the old South Lawrence Library, located at 135 Parker Street, Lawrence, Massachusetts 01843, as a resource center.

This center will serve as a valuable resource for South Lawrence children, providing them with a safe and welcoming environment where they can receive homework assistance, guidance on completing college and financial aid applications, and information about apprenticeship opportunities.

I have also had important conversations with Mayor Perry and the President of the YMCA about building a facility in the heart of the East End Neighborhood. This facility will provide children with access to resources and opportunities, enhancing their social skills and supporting their personal growth.

Additionally, as a member of the House Committee on Revenue, I plan to advocate for policies and funding that will benefit our communities.

It is critical that we invest in our communities' infrastructure, education, and economic development. By doing so, we can create a foundation for long-term growth and prosperity.

These efforts are part of my commitment to creating opportunities and improving the quality of life in our communities. I am dedicated to working with local leaders and community organizations to create a positive impact.

Through my work on the House committees and my collaborations with local leaders and community organizations, I am committed to making a positive difference in the lives of our residents.

I invite the entire community to join our efforts for a better Merrimack

Valley. By investing in education, infrastructure, and economic development, we can create a foundation for long-term growth and prosperity. Together, we can create a better future for our communities. Thank you for your support.

Francisco Paulino
State Representative Dist 16th
francisco.paulino@mahouse.gov ◊

GENEST: FROM PAGE 8

job. The reality is that Dracut doesn't need Phil Thibault to sit on another board, we need someone—anyone—other than him! He's stale, his lack of ideas is stale, and so are his not-ready-for-primetime pals.

The problem is that Phil Thibault is more angry and bitter than ever since he was rejected by the Board of Selectmen for the newly created at-large seat on the Zoning Bylaw Review Committee last December. Meanwhile, the board majority cited conflict of interest, as Thibault is an architect who conducts business in town.

Instead of reflecting inward, Phil Thibault is lashing out. But the truth hurts: In 2016, Thibault resigned from the Planning Board and then he went on his buddy Warren Shaw's AM radio program to talk about it. Shaw's sidekick Shawn Ashe posted the audio recording on his Dracut Forum blog.

(https://www.dracutforum.com/index.php/2016/08/28/phil-thibault-resigns-from-planning-board/)

Now, Phil Thibault thinks he's the best person to fill an opening on the economic development committee. Can he get the votes? Time will tell.

In the meantime, what Phil Thibault should do is look in the mirror, especially if he wants to talk about ethics and conflicts of interest. Or read the Lowell Sun. In October of 2020, the Lowell Sun exposed some of Phil Thibault's completely unethical and self-serving behavior at DATV.

"Imagine if Phil Thibault had been elected to the Dracut Board of Selectmen.

Even though the Dracut Access Cable Television board of directors, on which Thibault serves, is technically not a government body, Thibault apparently thought there was nothing improper with landing a $10,000 contract to help design DATV's new studio, as Thibault is an architect."

Phil Thibault can't win an election, but he wants to give you electoral advice. Phil Thibault refuses to acknowledge his own conflicts of interest but questions the ethics of others. Phil Thibault wants to win a Pulitzer Prize but the tool most appropriate for his writing skills is a crayon. At least Phil Thibault is always good for one thing: a laugh!

Btw, Phil Thibault would probably run for U.S. Congress or President of the Universe next, but he thinks Dracut couldn't survive without him. So, he's likely to play it safe instead. Perhaps Phil Thibault will ask to be appointed town dog catcher, if he can get the votes.

— Brian Genest is the producer and host of Eye On Dracut, winner of the Hometown Media Award for News, sponsored by Lucky Oil. ◊

For 19 Years The Valley Patriot has not only been a critical source for unbiased news but you have also set the standard for community involvement and helping those less fortainate!

HAPPY 19TH ANNIVERSARY! WE CAN'T WAIT FOR THE BASH!!

WILLS & TRUSTS ARE WHAT WE DO!!!

Every day when we walk out the door, there is always the possibility that it may be our "last" time. You wouldn't walk out the door without your wallet; if you fail to plan for your Family's future, that's exactly what you may be doing.

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Tom Duggan & The Valley Patriot

For 19 years The Valley Patriot has called out the corrupt politicians in the Merrimack Valley and used this newspaper to bring the community together. From honoring veterans, to helping the homeless, supporting local non-profits, and our police and firefighters, The Valley Patriot has become the one organizion in the area that people can trust to make our community better! I am proud to support The Valley Patriot and even more proud to call Tom Duggan my FRIEND!

Your Friend William Castro,

Chief of Staff to Lawrence Mayor Brian DePena

North Andover Musician Holds 12th Annual Alzheimer's Benefit Concert to Honor Her Grandfather Ken Canning, Sr.

"A Night on the Edge!" – March 18 – Will Raise Funds for Alzheimer's Foundation of America's Programs, Services, Research to Help Families Impacted by Alzheimer's Disease

On Saturday, March 18, North Andover-native Michelle Canning and her Michelle Canning Band will host an Alzheimer's benefit concert in honor of her grandfather who lived with Alzheimer's.

The 12th annual "A Night on the Edge!" will raise funds for the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) to support programs and services for families impacted by Alzheimer's disease and research towards better treatment and a cure.

The concert will take place at Chelmsford Elks Hall, located at 300 Littleton Road in Chelmsford, MA. Doors open at 6:00pm ET and the concert will begin at 7:00 pm.

"The thing that I love about 'A Night on the Edge!' is that it is an opportunity for people to come together and enjoy a fun night out while simultaneously helping our loved ones, friends, and strangers get through such an incredibly hard period of their life," said Michelle Canning. "AFA has shown so much support for Alzheimer's and dementia patients, caregivers, and families, and it is an honor to support their cause, one concert at a time."

"Michelle Canning is a very gifted musician, but more importantly, she's a wonderful person who is using her talents to make a difference in the lives of others," said Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr., AFA's president and CEO.

"We are inspired by Michelle and are grateful for everything she is doing to further the fight against Alzheimer's disease in her grandfather's memory."

The cause hits home for Ms. Canning as her grandfather, Ken Canning, Sr., had Alzheimer's disease and passed away at the age of 82 from the illness. She co-wrote a song in his honor called "It'll Take Him Away." She also co-wrote a new, fictional song about a woman with Alzheimer's called "Better Left Unsaid" which she will perform at the concert.

People can share photos of their loved ones who are living with, or have passed from, Alzheimer's by sending them to info@MichelleCanning.net a week in advance of the concert to be shown during the performance.

To date, the annual benefit has raised more than $57,000 for AFA. Proceeds raised by the event help fund AFA programs and services nationwide, which include a National Toll-Free Helpline, the National Memory Screening Program, therapeutic and educational programs, caregiver support groups, professional training, as well as research towards better treatment and a cure.

Currently, more than 130,000 people in Massachusetts are living with Alzheimer's disease.

Tickets for Michelle Canning's March 18 benefit concert in support of the Alzheimer's Foundation of America can be purchased at www.michellecanning.net. Those who cannot attend but would like to make a donation can do so by visiting www.michellecanning.net or www.alzfdn.org/donate. ◊

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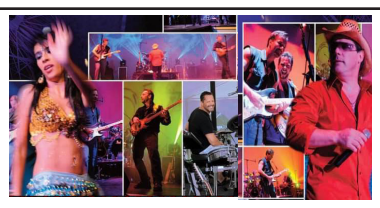
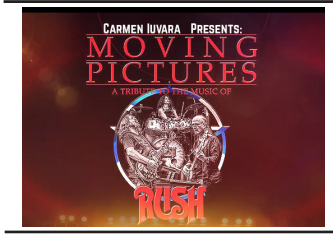
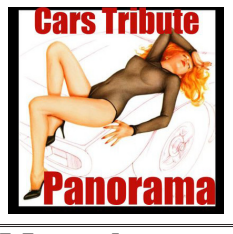




Moving Pictures!
Rush Tribute Band
with Rush Tribute Band "Burn Permit"
Friday, April 1st * 8pm

Panorama
The Cars Tribute Band
with Eljer P. Sloan
Saturday, May 13th * 8pm



Elton John Tribute
with Diamond Edge
Sat., May 20th, at 9 PM

Manticore
Sept. 9 - 8pm

"Lucky Man"

Congratulations to

The Valley Patriot!

It's hard to believe that it was 19 years ago when The Valley Patriot first hit the streets. Looking back at all the corruption you have exposed, and the way you have educated the public about our government, I know the Merrimack Valley is better off for your efforts!

Congratulations to Tom Duggan and everyone at The Valley Patriot for not only exercising, but fighting for the 1st Amendment to the United States Constitution!

~Mike Gagliardi~

19 Years of Exposing Corruption & Taking on the Establishment ...

from the VERY first edition!

-Mike Gagliardi,
Local 175 Laborers' Union of North America

Jocelyn Maroun Brings Family Recipe, Intimate Touch to *SeVmar Bistro* in Salem

Businesswoman Jocelyn Maroun is no longer affiliated with the restaurant that still bears her name, and has opened up a new restaurant with her new partner Kelvin Severino. It is called SeVmar Mediterranean Bistro, located at 401 Main St. in Salem, NH.

Several of our readers emailed and called us over the last few weeks to tell us about Jocelyn's new restaurant and urged us to do a story on her come back.

Pulling into the parking lot (plenty of parking!) at SeVmar we knew we were in the right place when we saw a fire-engine-red colored phone booth outside the restaurant entrance.

Once inside the door you immediately notice a spacious bar in front with very romantic lighting and furniture designs. Comfortable, padded seats and benches that are far enough away from each other for an intimate conversation.

Within minutes we were greeted by Jocelyn and sat down to talk about her new project.

"So, you used to be "Jocelyn's,". I don't know if you want to talk about that at all, but…"

"No, I will talk about whatever you want,"

QUESTION: "It must be tough having the restaurant still bearing your name while you are now running SeVmar."

JOCELYN: I try to be classy about it. My ex-husband kept Jocelyn's restaurant and I have nothing to do with it anymore. It is what it is, I've moved on, and I'm at SeVmar now with my partner Kelvin Severino."

QUESTION: How did you come up with the name SeVmar?

"My last name is Maroun. My partner's last name is Severino. So SeVmar is half of his last name and half of mine. We thought it had a flare to it with the V in the middle. Kelvin had hired me temporarily at his company after I wasn't at Jocelyn's anymore. After some time, I realized there wasn't an opportunity for me to go back to it. It's a long, complicated story, but Kelvin and I ended up partnering up in the restaurant business and it's been a great opportunity."

"The first night we were open, it was so nice. All my regular customers were here. We opened and they just started showing up. Night after night, it is all familiar faces."

Q: How did they find you?

"I didn't put it out there, really. I made one post on social media and it just spread by word of mouth. The community started chatting it up about it on their own and sharing the information. It's been a blessing. It's been beautiful, overwhelming, and heartwarming. The people of this community have always been so good to me and my family."

"My father is back with me again here. It's been overwhelming support. I am so grateful."

Q: When did you open?

"This is our fourth week now. We opened on the 16th (of February) and we haven't been able to keep up with the volume. I mean, it's only eleven tables. I thought with the space it wasn't going to be too hard to handle, but it's turned into a big operation so, we are looking to expand."

Q: What do you think is the reason for the instant success of SeVmar?

"I think it's the personal touch."

"You know my dad started Jocelyn's, so it's literally the same menu. My father started Salem Kabob's in 2002 and we made this menu back then. So, now all three menus, SeVmar, Salem Kabob, and Jocelyn's all came from us- it's a similar menu. It's not like we can change our family recipes."

Q Did you ever think about trying a new menu, something different?

"Well, the first week we opened we advertised that we had a new chef. People were coming in saying it tasted different. Not that it was bad, just different. So, we did try something different at first, and I gave her the freedom to cook what she wanted because I respect her as a chef, but the customers kept asking for my family recipe. They wanted what we always gave them. So, I realized quickly that people were coming here because they wanted what they were used to having. My intention wasn't to stick to the same menu, but that's what the customers are asking for and that's what they really want."

"My dad is back and the customers are happy. So, if anyone came in the first week and it wasn't what they expected, that has been changed, we'd love to have you back."

Q: We heard about you being at SeVmar after we did a restaurant review on Lebanese food. We got emails from our readers - and a couple of advertisers - telling us you were back. Why do you think you have such a great reputation, is it really the food or is it something else too?

"I have not done any advertising at all and look at the crowd here on a Thursday afternoon. Remember, I was at the other restaurant for 14 years and a lot of these people have become my friends. Some of them remember when I was pregnant with my daughter. The restaurant was my life, the customers became my family, my friends, and I was very intimate with them in the sense that we got to know each other's families, it was very personal."

"On a Friday and Saturday, you look at the camera and all you can see is the line of people at the door and sometimes people walk out because they don't want to wait. We can't take reservations online because we only have 11 tables right now. We would be setting ourselves up for failure. So, until we expand, guests have to call us the old-fashioned way.

Jocelyn Maroun Lands on her Feet at SeVmar

Q: We've always known the Maroun family in the Merrimack Valley I'm sure that made things easier when you left the other restaurant.

"I've been very fortunate since I left the other restaurant, doors have opened for me. At first, I thought 'what am I going to do, this is all I know?' But, I've been blessed to have such a great family, and then I met a great business partner with Kelvin."

"We now have this small bistro in Salem, N.H., it's the same bistro I grew up in at Salem Kabob working behind the counter as a child. Now, we've re-bought it back from my family as the next generation and modernized it. We have a bar now which is great. We are looking to expand to accommodate the volume. My daughter is here, my father is here, it's a happy place, and I'm happy again. It's all about good service, good food, good energy, and that's what the customers want.

Q: Is it harder or easier now that you're not married to your business partner in a restaurant? I would imagine it's quite the adjustment.

"Well, here, I have some more freedom and creativity. If I want to change something or add something, I have the freedom to do that. Kelvin is very supportive, so, there's a lot more flexibility. He owns a national demolition company (ADEP Group), so he brings a lot of value to our team in terms of running a business the right way, staying organized, and thinking outside of the box. He took me under his wing and has been a huge blessing. So, it's not what I'm used to, you are right it's an adjustment but it's a good adjustment.

Q: Are you having a hard time

SEVMAR: PAGE 23

Salisbury Town Manager Neil Harrington Failed to File Mandated Annual Town Reports for 13 Years

Board of Selectmen Gave Positive Evaluations for Each of Those Years

Town records show that Salisbury Town Manager Neil Harrington has not filed state-mandated annual town reports from fiscal years 2002 through 2007, and also failed to file annual town reports from fiscal years 2016 to 2022.

The Valley Patriot also confirmed the fact that Harrington has been derelict in his Town Manager duties through the State Library, where the Annual Reports must be archived according to MGL Ch. 40, Section 49.

HARRINGTON VIOLATED TOWN CHARTER

"A copy of such fiscal year reports shall be transmitted by the town clerk to the state library before the first day of November. A town may also by by-law provide for the printing of all reports of town officers and boards, committees and commissions on a fiscal year basis in place of the calendar year report required by this section."

Naomi Allen from the State Library told our reporters that the State Library does not have annual reports for any of the above years.

HARRINGTON IN VIOLATION OF THE TOWN CHARTER

According to the Salisbury Town Charter, Section 4-2 section (e); Powers and Duties of the Town Manager;

"(e) To ensure that full and complete records of the financial and administrative activities of the Town are kept, and to render as often as may be required by the Board of Selectmen, but not less than once in each year, a full report of all Town administrative operations during the period reported on as required by Massachusetts General Laws,[1] which report shall be made available to the public in print and electronically."

According to the Town Charter, it is the legal responsibility of the Board of Selectmen to hold the Town Manager accountable for doing the report.

Research by Valley Patriot reporters reveal that for each of the years Town Manager Neil Harrington failed in his legal duties to provide an annual town report, yet the Board of Selectmen gave him glowing evaluations and even renewed his contract.

Harrington is a resident of Salem, MA and is running for mayor of that city while he is performing his duties (or not performing his duties) as Salisbury Town Manager.

Harrington is most known by Valley Patriot readers for his refusal to turn over public documents and forcing this newspaper to file complaints with the Secretary of State's Public Records Division and enlist the help of a local state senator to get access to documents that Harrington was trying to conceal. ◊

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Rescue Dog from Tennessee, Max is Haverhill's Top Dog; Wears License No. 1

WHAV.NET

Haverhill City Clerk Kaitlin M. Wright said Wednesday "Max," a one-and-a-half-year-old male mixed breed, was named the first-place winner during the City Clerk's office Second Annual "Haverhill Top Dog" contest. Max now gets to wear dog license no. 1 for the year. Max was adopted by Jack and Joan-Hatem Roy.

"He loves to play catch and he's a love bug," said Jack Roy. He said Sweet Paws in Groveland arranged for the adoption. Max is named after Max Verstappen, the 2021 and 2022 Formula One World Champion, since he used to watch the races as a puppy with the family.

"Ginger," a Collie mix, is own by David Boucher. (Courtesy photograph.)

Second place was awarded to "Ginger," a six-year-old female Collie mix, owner by David Boucher. She will wear dog license no. 2. "Bruno," a two-year old male Labrador Retriever, took third place. His owner is Anne Rosa. Bruno was awarded dog license no. 3.

"Haverhill Top Dog" contest encourages residents to license their dogs by offering them a friendly competition. The winners were randomly chosen Wednesday at the City Clerk's Office.

"Bruno," a Labrador Retriever, is owned by Anne Rosa. (Courtesy photograph.)

Wright thanked residents for participating and congratulated the winners, saying, "We were able to double our number of contestants from last year! We have enjoyed seeing the photos of your furry friends and are excited to hang the photos in our office to showcase the winners. Be on the lookout for our contest next year!"

Dogs must be licensed before May 31st or owners will incur a late fee. New dogs may be licensed at any time. Licensing may be completed in person at the Clerk's office located in City Hall, Room 118, 4 Summer St.; online at cityofhaverhill.com; or by mail. A copy of a valid rabies certificate is required for licensing.

Those with questions may call 978-374-2312. ◊

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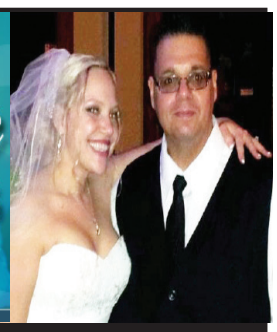
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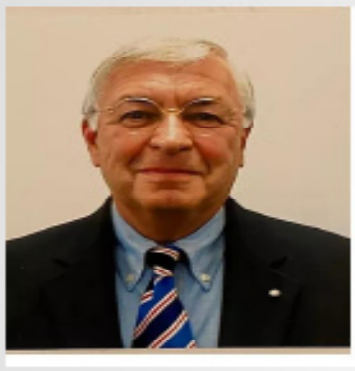
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Methuen Officials Surprise World War II Army Vet on Her 100th Birthday

WHAV.NET

Ethel LaSalle, a World War II Army veteran who has donated more than 300 blankets to area veterans' organizations over the years, was recently surprised on her 100th birthday by Methuen police, fire and city and state officials.

Last month, officials said, the police department received a request for cards for LaSalle's centennial. Methuen police officers, who also were the beneficiaries last fall of the woman's blankets, worked with others officials to plan a party. LaSalle was surprised Sunday with cards, balloons, gifts, cake and many well-wishers.

The longtime Methuen resident also received citations from Sen. Pavel Payano and Rep. Ryan Hamilton.

LaSalle entered the Army shortly after her high school graduation during World War II. While in the service, she met her husband, Norman Francis LaSalle. The two married during a three-day pass. Theyeventually raised two daughters, Ethel, and Marguerite.

She went on to become the first female commander of the AmVets, served three years as the commander of the American Legion in Stoneham and was appointed to the Governor's Advisory Council for Women Veterans. She is also past president of the Women's Army Corp, Chapter 14, in Boston, and past president of the VFW Ladies Auxiliary. LaSalle was granted lifetime membership in the Disabled American Veterans, Queen City Chapter 4 DAV, in Lawrence. ◊

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VALLEY PATRIOT BASH SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS NEED YOUR SUPPORT!!

March 31st at the Relief's In
1 Market St., Lawrence

What started off as one scholarship for $100 to a Lawrence High School senior to start off our annual BASH, has evolved over the years to become the main event.

Last year we gave out 6 scholarships and raised over $34,000. This year we are giving out 7 scholarships and our goal is $35,000 or $5,000 per student.

As of the publishing of this edition we are half way to our goal.

Each scholarship recipient was chosen by a Valley Patriot ambassador. They are :

North Andover school committeeman Andrew McDevitt chose Cam Reiland for the Dan Coady Memorial Scholarship. Haverhill School committee man Scott Wood chose our Whittier recipient Aturo Zuniga and our Michelle DeLuca Benedetti Haverhill High recipient Liam Robertson. Timmy Finn from Lawrence High School chose our special needs scholarship recipient Vanessa De La Cruz Sanchez . JrROTC Commander Ronan chose our Lawrence High JrROTC recipient Jaraliz Morales. Former Methuen School Committee member Jana DiNatale chose our Methuen High - Studio 21 scholarship recipient James Sugden. Methuen City Councilor Jessica Finocchiaro chose our Greater Lawrence Tech. Scholarship recipient Arielle Cavaretta.

Every penny donated to these scholarships goes directly to the students and is publicly posted on line for full transparency.

You can target your donation to a specific student of your choice. If you want to donate but have no preference, we will give your donation to the student(s) with the least amount of money on the night of the BASH.

THESE ARE OUR 2023 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

WHITTIER TECH SCHOLARSHIP
ARTURO ZUNIGA

This scholarship was started by Al Veilleux in 2018 who is an alum of the school. Each year Haverhill School Committeeman Scott Wood chooses the recipient of this scholarship through his extensive network at Whittier and this year he chose Arturo Zuniga.

Arturo Zuniga

Arturo Zuniga is a senior in the masonry program at Whittier Tech.

An extremely hard worker, Arturo has been proven his solid work ethic, maturity, and responsibility in his shop, his academic classes on the athletic fields, and in his co-op job.

Hailing from Haverhill, Arturo was captain of the varsity soccer team, is a valued member of the Whittier maintenance crew through his co-op job, and works another part-time job outside of school hours. He was described by his teachers as a quiet leader who will tackle any job project or assignment given to him without a single word of complaint.

After graduating from Whittier he has aspirations of studying construction management at Fitchburg State College or Wentworth Institution of Technology.

To donate to this scholarship use the methods in the black box above.

METHUEN HIGH - STUDIO 21 PODCAST CAFE SCHOLARSHIP
JAMES SUGDEN

Last year Dave Garofalo of Two Guys Smoke Shop and "The Studio 21 Podcast Cafe" donated $2,100 to start our first scholarship for a student in the Merrimack Valley going into broadcasting, communications, or media.

James Sugden

Since Methuen High School was not represented in our scholarship program I decided to designate this scholarship for a student in Methuen. This year's scholarship winner is James Sugden.

James Sugden's favorite classes are history and film/video production. Both sparked his interest, and he is eager to pursue a degree in History and Film in college.

James is very involved with the music program. He is in Honors Band, Marching Band, Jazz Band, Dirty Hands Ink, and he also plays in the school's theater productions.

These commitments certainly take up a lot of time after school, including multiple hours of practice.

He volunteered at a local grammar school for their fall festival, and he has assisted with unified track. He is a member of the National Honor and History Honor Societies as well.

Moreover, he works for the school's video production crew, and films the school committee meetings, which is a job he has had since last year.

This year, James did a Christmas Special involving teachers for his video production class and it was fabulous! James has applied to Bridgewater, Emerson, and Boston University.

HAVERHILL HIGH -
The MICHELLE DELUCA BENEDETTI MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP
LIAM ROBERTSON

The Michelle DeLuca Benedetti Memorial Scholarship was established by her brother Ken DeLuca with a $500 donation to a Haverhill High School Senior going into Criminal Justice or Social Work in the fall.

Liam Robertson

Michelle (DeLuca) Benedetti, 51, wife of Joseph A. Benedetti, passed away May 30, 2019 at High Pointe Hospice in Haverhill after a courageous battle with cancer. Her long fight didn't define her, however, nor did it slow her down. She made every moment count, right up to the last. She was surrounded by her loving family. Michelle obtained her Master's Degree from University of Massachusetts, Lowell. For 21 years she was employed with the State of Massachusetts in the Department of Children and Families as a Social Worker and Supervisor, working in the Haverhill Office since 2001.

This year's scholarship goes to LIAM ROBERTSON.

Liam is a current senior who is a three-season athlete at HHS. He participates in fall crew, winter track (captain), and spring track. His extracurricular activities include Foreign Language National Honor Society and National Honor Society. Liam plans to pursue a career in Criminal Justice and attend Merrimack in the fall of 2023.

Liam will also receive the DAN STRANGE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP in honor of Dan Strange a former board member of the New England Police Benevolent Association. Dan was a staple at our annual BASH and always helped us raise money for our Haverhill High School scholarship recipient.

TOM DUGGAN'S NOTEBOOK

To make a donation to any of these scholarships you can use the methods below;

Venmo: @Tom-Duggan-10

CashApp: $ValleyPatriot

PayPal: valleypatriot@aol.com

or you can mail a check to:
Valley Patriot BASH
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and put the name of the scholarship or student in the memo

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DAN COADY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP
CAM REILAND

Four years ago, one of our readers, Al Veilleux donated $500 to start a scholarship in memory of Dan Coady Jr. who was killed in a tragic accident on Rt. 495 just a week before our annual BASH in 2018. Each year Al asks that we keep the Dan Coady Memorial Scholarship going for students who attended the Thomson Grammar School in North Andover where at least one of Dan Coady's children attended at the time. Al's goal was to keep this scholarship going every year in the hopes that Dan's children will be able to receive this scholarship when they graduate from High School. Last year, Dan's oldest son Patrick received this scholarship.

Cam Reiland

This year's recipient is CAM REILAND of North Andover.

Camden Reiland is a proud graduate of The Thomson School. He has many amazing memories from attending six years at the historic North Andover elementary school. Some of them include early morning chess club with many of his neighborhood friends, hours of playing sports at the Kids Stop after school program and many great teachers and administrators mentoring him. Camden's favorite memories are the Veterans Day celebrations where we was once chosen to speak and honor our counties heroes.

A senior at North Andover High School, Camden has used the lessons learned at The Thomson School to blaze a bright path. He was a 3-year varsity starter and senior captain of the soccer team. During his senior year he was awarded the MVP award. He was also named to the Merrimack Conference First-Team in addition to playing in the Eastern Massachusetts All-Star Game.

Camden is a two time All American in Track and field. He is a 4-year varsity runner and currently captain of both the indoor and outdoor track teams. During his track career he has been a part of 6 team state championships, multiple Merrimack Valley individual championships and top 6 finish in the mile at the all state championships. He currently holds the North Andover High school record in the indoor 2 mile, 4X800 meter relay, 4Xmile relay, and the Distance medley relay.

Academically Camden has excelled as well. He is a member of the National Honor Society with a 4.425 GPA. Camden was selected to receive the Abigail Adams Scholarship for his high academic performance on the high school MCAS exams. His hard work academically has earned him a spot at many colleges and universities, which he has yet to decide where he will attend.

Camden has also volunteered for many things around the community. He has spent time helping at the elementary schools, including Thomson, demonstrating chemistry experiments with his AP classmates. He has also traveled around town to mentor elementary and middle school students as captain of his sports teams. He is proud to live and represent North Andover.

Shaws Employees in Methuen Donate Dinner for the Homeless and Come to Serve the Meal Themselves

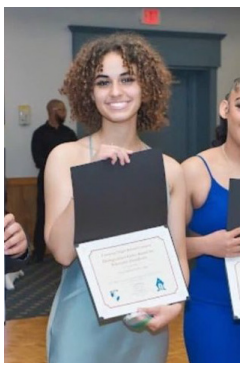
Employees from the Shaws Distribution Center in Methuen donated $400 to sponsor the TMF Family Dinner for the Homeless in Lawrence last month. Pictured, front row: Morgan Hall, Dahianara Liranzo, Yaleiny Melic, Back row: Jim Hall, Maritza Pena, Richard Munoz, Wesley Clegg, Yarimar De La Cruz, and Tony Franco.

LAWRENCE HIGH JrROTC SCHOLARSHIP
JARALIZ MORALES

(See KANE'S column on page 9)

Jaraliz Morales is a senior at Lawrence High School who achieved the rank of Cadet LTC and is currently serving as the Battalion Commander of the Lancer Battalion.

Jaraliz attends Lawrence Abbott Academy. She has a unique leadership style and is respected by all members of the battalion. Cadet LTC Morales is strict yet approachable. She brought the unarmed drill team to victory this drill season winning 2 out of 3 competitions. This cadet is also part of the Lancer battalion step team and has performed for the last several years all over the Merrimack Valley. We are certain that Jaraliz will be successful in anything she sets her mind to. Jaraliz is also the recipient of this year's first JOHN RATKA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP in honor of hero veteran John Ratka


Jaraliz Morales

GREATER LAWRENCE TECH SCHOLARSHIP
ARIELLE CAVARETTA

This scholarship was started about ten years ago by Methuen City Councilor Jessica Finocchiaro who was on the Gr. Lawrence Tech School Committee at the time. Her pick this year is Arielle Cavaretta.

Arielle Cavaretta

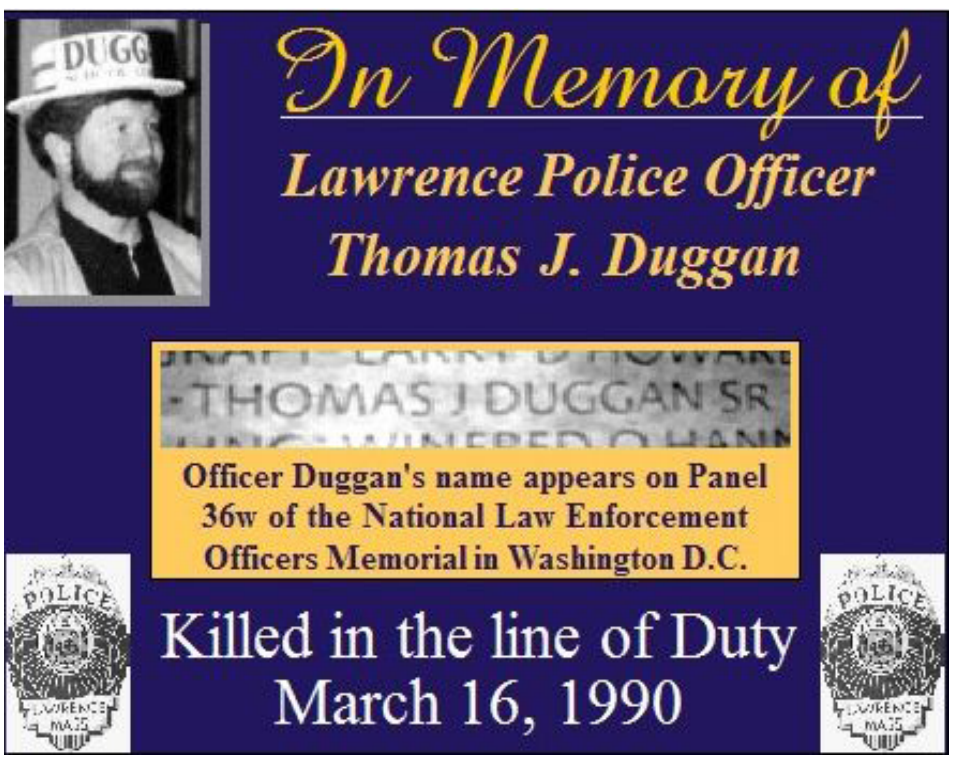
Arielle is a 12th grade student in the Engineering program at Greater Lawrence Technical School. Arielle has excelled academically throughout her high school career. She is currently ranked 5th in a class of 405 students and maintains a 4.3 / 4.0 GPA while taking honors level classes. Outside of the classroom, Arielle is active and involved in the GLTS school community. She can be found most days after school at meetings for various clubs or volunteering at school events. She is an editor of the yearbook, a member of the National Honor Society, co-president of her class and part of our 'Reggie Leader' group. As a Reggie Leader, she mentors younger students and acts as an ambassador for our school at community events. Arielle also volunteers to wrap Christmas gifts for children at St. Lucy Parish and plants flags on Memorial Day at St. Mary - Immaculate Conception Cemetery in Methuen. She is able to achieve outstanding grades, be involved at GLTS and volunteer in her community while also working a part time job. Arielle plans to study animal science at UMass Amherst, UNH or University of Connecticut. Arielle lives in Methuen with her parents, Mark and Kelly Cavaretta.

PHIL GLENDYE SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOLARSHIP
VANESSA DE LA CRUZ SANCHEZ

This scholarship was started last year in memory of Phil Glendye of Lawrence High School who passed away after decades of working with special needs students and running the SPECIAL OLYMPICS every year at the Veterans Memorial Stadium in Lawrence.

Vanessa De La Cruz Sanchez

This year's recipient Vanessa De La Cruz Sanchez, participates in the Lawrence High Early College Program taking classes at Merrimack College. She applied to BU, Framingham State, Emmanuel College, Merrimack, Northeastern, UMass Amherst, UMass Lowell, UMass Boston, UMass Dartmouth, and Wheaton College. Vanessa wants to study Pre-Med and become a pediatrician. This scholarship recipient was chosen by Timmy Finn of Lawrence high School. ◊



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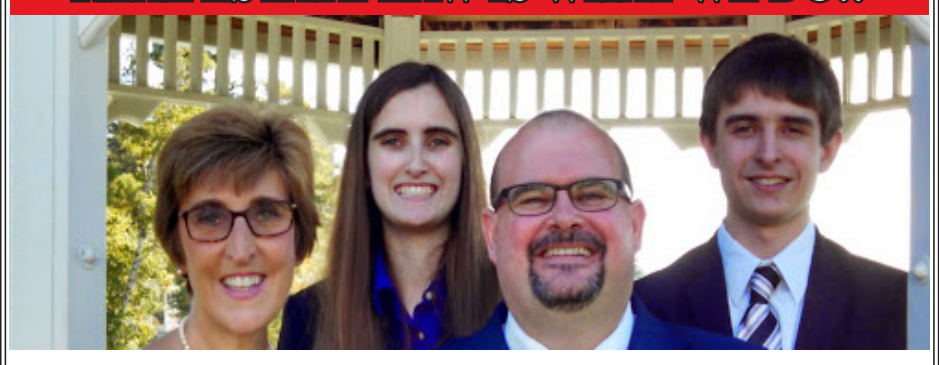

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HERO: FROM PAGE 1

company running. This allows him to focus his efforts on the needs of the family and friends of the deceased. Dan is also responsible for making sure all local, state, and federal regulations regarding the funeral and burial are followed. The funeral home is currently handling over fifty funeral services a year, with a large following in the Merrimack Valley's French-Canadian and Veterans communities. Reminiscing about his childhood neighborhood in Lawrence, at a time when Christmas and Easter services at St. Mary's Church was filled with Irish families, St. Francis Church with Lithuanian families, and St. Anne's was filled to the rafters with French Canadian families. All three Roman Catholic churches, packed with Lawrence families on Sundays, were within a few yards of each other.

Dan completed Funeral Services training at Briarwood College, in Southington Connecticut, in 1996. Dan is a also a proud graduate of the University of Massachusetts' Manning School of Business, earning his business degree on the Lowell, Massachusetts Campus in 2022. Dan can easily guide a deceased Veteran's family through the eligibility requirements and nuances of a US Military funeral. Dan quickly reviewed the eligibility requirements of the New Hampshire and Massachusetts Veteran's cemeteries, and Arlington National in Washington, DC.

From a family with a tradition of military service, both of Dan's grandfathers served in World War II, one in the US Navy on an LST, the other in the US Army Signal corps. A broken back kept his dad from military service during Vietnam, his family's patriotism and a desire to serve our nation, led Dan into the US Marine Corp. A businessman, Veteran, husband, father, and grandfather, Dan Cotnoir is a "Hero in Our Midst".

On Tuesday February 28th, I had a routine medical appointment at the Veteran's Administration. I was disheartened, to overhear elderly Veterans from the Second World War, Korean War, and Vietnam War, pleading, nearly begging, at the front desk for refills of medical prescriptions not covered by Medicare. I applaud the staff of the Veteran's Administration, who seem to be doing everything in their power to serve our Nation's Veterans, but are hamstrung, by the rules and regulations, imposed by our elected officials. Asking the Valley Patriot readers to write or call their congressman and two senators and ask them why this is happening? In a nation that has spent billions in the Middle East and the Ukraine? Asking all Valley Patriot readers to make sure they, and their entire family, is registered to VOTE!

The Dracut American Legion asks all World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War Veterans, to call (603) 518-5368 and sign up for an Honor Flight to the Memorials in Washington DC! Veterans of all eras are asked to go the American Legion's Web site www.legion.org, and join the American Legion, our mission is working with Congress, Veterans, and the Community, preserving our Veteran's Benefits for future generations and serving all Veterans and their families.

John Cuddy served in the US Navy's Construction Battalions (also known as the Seabees) after retiring from the US Navy; he earned a bachelor's in history and a master's in economics from the University of Massachusetts on the Lowell Campus. He has been employed in Logistics at FedEx for the last 26 years. If you know a World War II, Korean War, or Vietnam War Veteran who would like their story told, please email him at John.Cuddy@Yahoo.com ◊

Jocelyn Maroun and Kelvin Severino, partners of the new SeVmar Mediterranean Bistro in Salem, N.H.

SEVMAR FROM PAGE 15

finding people to work?

"I had very low turnover at the other place and my same team stuck with me for years. They were so loyal."

"When we opened here most of them reached out, but I could only hire a few of them. So no I haven't had any problem finding people to work. I wish I could have hired more of my old staff."

"We will see how it goes after we expand. Management and most of my staff now are all people who used to be with me before. They know what I expect, customers are familiar with them, and we work very well together. A whole family."

Q: How would you describe this place to someone who has never been to the other place, doesn't know the history, and just wants a great place to have dinner?

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"Boldness in the sense that we can be funky. We are sometimes going to think outside the box. We've got some funky chairs, funky designs, funky drinks."

"As far as intimacy, it's an intimate place where you can come with your friends, with your mother, or your co-worker. We want people to feel like it's intimate and not rushed."

"Excellence in service, excellence in food. And virtue is just doing the right things. Providing a positive atmosphere and energy so everyone who comes here enjoys the environment and the food and want to come back."

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SUE PIAZZA's BOOK REVIEW

Moriarty
by Anthony Horowitz

Book Review: Moriarty by Anthony Horowitz

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Harper Collins Publishing 2014

Genre: Mystery

Bookmarkers: 5 of 5

Tasked with writing a novel in the style of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Anthony Horowitz does a fine job of mimicking Conan Doyle's style. This Sherlock Holmes novel reads as if the master himself created it.

The invitation to this great mystery starts with the book cover. Simple yet elegant this one effectively draws the bibliophile in to witness the stark realities of life and death. This book, a follow-up to House of Silk, is not a sequel but a well-crafted stand-alone novel.

Reichenbach Falls. This novel takes place immediately after the battle between Sherlock Holmes and his nemesis, Professor Moriarty.

Both men are presumed dead. Found, only one body. Scotland Yard Inspector Athelney Jones, (originally introduced by Conan Doyle in The Sign of Four) a practitioner of Holmes' techniques, travels to Switzerland to investigate. Inspector Jones encounters Frederick Chase, who is introduced to us as a senior investigator with the Pinkerton Investigation Agency in NY. Chase is to Jones as Watson was to Holmes.

Presumed to be Moriarty's body, this master villain's death leaves a void in the world of crime. A new syndicate emerges with a deadlier, more vicious class of criminals. The two detectives attempt to uncover the members of this organization and put an end to the grewsome murders plaguing Victorian England. London 1891.

The visuals and the words used to portray 19th century England are elaborately detailed becoming as much a character as are the individual people. Only a few odd British words make the reader pause. One such example is: "...Holmes goes haring off ..."

The author's sentences are vivid. In describing the falls, Horowitz writes: "It was as if the world were ending here in a perpetual apocalypse of thundering water and spray rising like steam, the birds frightened away, and the sun blocked out. The walls that enclosed this raging deluge were jagged and harsh and as old as Rip Van Winkle."

Another example of his interesting sentence structure and word choices is the way he conveys information regarding the person dredged from the water. Instead of simply telling us the man is dead, we are told: "The third man is tall and thin with a prominent forehead and sunken eyes which might view the world with a cold malevolence and cunning were there any life in them at all."

One segment, that I understand is necessary to propel the plot forward, disturbs me. Jones finds a note in the bloated dead man's wet jacket pocket. How is it that the ink has not faded?

Had the paper been typed and not handwritten this evidence might not have removed me from the storyline. But instead of continuing to read, I was left to ponder how, after a spill from the fall's height and sloshing around prior to being found, that this paper would still be pristine enough to read, and its cryptic contents capable of being deciphered.

This was the only issue I had with this novel.

The narrator/chronicler sprinkled hints throughout, but skillfully placed wording masked their true meaning. I never saw this end coming.

A definite must read, especially for a Conan Doyle fan.

Susan Piazza, a Navy veteran, is an author, columnist, and blogger. Book One in her Ongoing Indigenous Tale series, "A Bird Call That Isn't," can be found on Amazon at:

A Bird Call That Isn't: https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0829MHLRX

Her second book in the series, Destiny's Daughter, will be out in 2023.◊

THE DOCTOR IS IN!

Dealing with Autism

Dr. Pierre Ghassibi
VALLEY PATRIOT MEDICAL COLUMNIST

Greetings.

Autism is making the news more than any other pediatric condition now. What I gathered from trying to understand it follows:

Children with autism are much more sensitive to stimuli compared to children without autism (neurotypical is the term used by autism specialists to refer to people without autism).

Stimuli totally overwhelm these children (Sensory Overload). A neurotypical child can go to a museum and admire the many paintings hanging on the walls.

A child with autism feels attacked by the complexity of the many paintings, the colors, the different shapes, etc. This is why the child will fixate only on one single painting to try to tune out all other stimuli.

Some repetitive behavior, repeating the same word many times, performing a single obsessive action persistently is a way to do one single thing so as the child hypnotizes herself or himself away from all other stimuli in the surroundings. It is a way to regulate her or his mental state. In the past, we used to try to suppress repetitive behaviors, which led to "dysregulation" and a sense of loss of control and panic. Imagine that you have to solve many problems at the same time in a second…

A child with autism who was hurt by stepping on a nail in the past , may repeat the word "nail" many times each time he feels scared of something, even if not related to a "nail". In her or his mind, the word "nail" is used to tell the parents that the child does not want to feel the pain felt when she or he stepped on a nail.

For me, understanding this helped me see a bit more into the mind of a child with autism. Instead of suppressing an atypical behavior that we think is abnormal, we should see it as normal for the child with autism, accept it and work with it.

Let me add here , unrelated to autism, that a toddler 's understanding of some words may be different from their real meaning for an adult. A child can say I "want"the knife to mean

"Look mommy, there is a pretty knife here " . The mother would frown and scold saying "NO"!

You cannot have a knife". Seeing his mom frowning, the child would get scared and start crying which gets interpreted by the mother that the child is insisting on getting something forbidden.

If this happens to you, smile and say "Oh, yes, it's a pretty knife". You will see that the child will smile and be happy. To her or him, I "want" did not mean I "want:", it meant "look mom" …

High functioning Autism is not an official diagnosis. A child or adult with high functioning autism continues to suffer from sensory overload and may have a meltdown if the overload continues. It all depends on the situation.

P. Ghassibi, md
ghassibi@hotmail.com ◊

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TV TALK with BILL CUSHING

Bill Cushing
VALLEY PATRIOT TV COLUMNIST

Take a look at any episode of the old detective series 'Columbo' and you'll see that the title's yellow letters and font are echoed precisely in the new Peacock series 'Poker Face,' created by Rian Johnson, the creator of The Knives Out film franchise.

Like Peter Falk, 'Poker Face' star Natasha Lyonne has one of TV's most distinctive presences, with that raspy voice and a personality that is down to earth, yet a little out there. Like Lyonne's other series 'Russian Doll,' 'Poker Face,' puts her in a time-travel story of a different kind: a contemporary revisiting of the nostalgic detective crime stories of network TV from days past.

The series follows Charlie Cale (Lyonne), a Vegas cocktail waitress with the ability to tell when someone is lying…. Or bluffing, which comes in handy when you're playing poker, which just so happens to be Charlie's former profession.

The murder of a friend makes Charlie realize that she can also use her intuition to solve crimes — and after she implicates a powerful casino boss, she ends up on the run down the back roads of America stumbling into murders at every turn.

Like 'Columbo,' each episode of 'Poker Face' begins with a murder, with a victim, perpetrator, and smoking gun all in plain sight. Before long, the clock rewinds to discover how Charlie fits into the proceedings, and ultimately utilizes her uncanny gift of knowing whenever someone is lying. So 'Poker Face' isn't so much a whodunit as it is a how-dunit or a why-dunit.

As Charlie says about her ability, "the real trick of it is figuring out why: why somebody is lying". People spout lies and deceptions all the time. Mostly, they're minor and have little impact on anyone else, Charlie advises. But it's the reasoning behind the bigger lies that she's interested in. So, the show moves her from place to place, has her hear a lie just as a body shows up, then saddles her with puzzling out what's going on — and, yes, why.

Rather than trying to guess who the murderer is, that work is already done. Instead, you wonder: How does Charlie know this person? Where does she fit in? What job is she working behind the scenes this time? Charlie's not a cop and she's on the run herself, which changes how she approaches each murder. So how can she make them pay for their acts? The show sometimes finds clever and surprising answers to that last question; sometimes it's a little more conventional.

Lyonne is terrific in the lead role as Charlie, a real delight to watch, and the show capitalizes on her charm. But 'Poker Face' also has a line-up of impressive guest stars including Ellen Barkin, Adrian Brody, Joseph Gordon Levitt, Nick Nolte, and Judith Light, and it's Lyonne's interaction with them that lets the sparks fly. The writing is excellent too, the stories are creatively built and are consistently funny and surprising, with great attention to details both criminal and comic.

Don't get me wrong, I love this age of prestige TV and the slow burn TV Drama. But It's a nice change of pace to see a TV show that actually wants to be a TV show instead of a 10-hour movie. A show where you can basically watch an episode without having to worry too much that you missed an episode somewhere along the way and may not be able to follow what's going on.

The show has already been renewed for a second season. Rian Johnson and Natasha Lyonne have said that they'd like to keep making it for as long as they possibly can. I hope they get the chance, because it's a blast.

'Poker Face' is available to stream on Peacock.

If you have any questions about TV, you can email me at BillsTVTalk@gmail.com.

I will answer all of your questions and will feature some of the questions I receive in a future Mailbag column. Follow me on Twitter and Instagram @BillsTVTalk and on Facebook at BillsTVTalk for daily up-to-the-minute TV news and discussion. ◊

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"Revival" 2023

Peter Larocque
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Greetings and God Bless every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and Savior.

"Revival" is very much a topic of discussion these days among Christians, especially with what recently took place for 15 days among the young students, faculty, staff, and the local community along with visitors from all around the Asbury University Campus in Kentucky. If for some reason you are not familiar with what I am referring to, please check it out at: asbury.edu/outpouring.

The actual word, "revival" is not found in the Bible, but we can read another word in the Bible that is synonymous with the word revival which is "awake or awaken or to be awakened." To be awakened leaves us with the notion that at one time, one was awake. For it is impossible to restore something that never existed.

"Revival," what it is not? It is not a series of meetings with our favorite Pastor Speakers giving us a series of teachings from the Bible that produce goosebumps and chills and when they are over, we go home and start planning the next event.

"Revival" in a Biblical sense is a reawakening of the fervor, the intense emotion compelling one to action. For instance, we read in Romans 13:11-14, "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." NKJV. We read here the call to:

Awake Out of Sleep, Cast off the Works of Darkness, Put on the Armor of Light, Walk Properly, Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and Make no provision for the Flesh.

We read more in 1 Corinthians 15:34, "Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame." NKJV.

The call here is to:

Awake to Righteousness which is Your Right Standing with God! And do not Sin. Sin means Missing the Mark. Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," NKJV.

(There are consequences to sin. Sin makes you stay longer than you want to and pay more than you want to pay.)

And we read on in Ephesians 5:14-19, "Therefore He says: Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light. 15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; [wasting by misuse] but be filled with the Spirit," NKJV.

The call here is to:

Awake, those of you who are Sleeping, Arise from the Dead, Walk with Wisdom, Redeem the Time, Understand what the Will of the Lord is, and Be filled with the Spirit.

Each time we are told to awake there is a call to Action and not just with intense emotion or feeling, but with putting the emotion into motion!!! What good is the Revival if nothing comes of it?

I am reminded of the first sermon, the first message to the Church in Acts Chapter 2 delivered by the Apostle Peter, and when he was finished those that were present were moved to ask, "what shall we do?" The Apostle Peter's response is found in Acts 2:38, "Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." NKJV.

True revival or awakening involves Repentance and Being Filled with the Holy Spirit which you receive when you get Born-Again. This is exactly what is happening at the Ashbury University Campus.

True Revival has three major components, (1). The Praise and Worship of Jesus Christ only. No religion, no denomination no other person is being exalted, but the one and only King of Kings and Lord of Lords. (2). Repentance leading to Salvation. (3). Being filled with and moved by the Holy Spirit.

Revival is not required to have fancy music by famous Christian Bands, just a simple gathering of humbled followers of Jesus for one purpose, To Glorify God Almighty, the Creator of Heaven and Earth!

When God calls us it's always on Purpose for a Purpose!!! Romans 8:28, tells us, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." NKJV.

Revival or Awakening begins and ends with Jesus! Now is the time to repent which simply means changing your way of thinking. You thought one way and now because of Jesus, you changed and think another way. We read in Acts 3:19, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord," NKJV.

Where does Times of Refreshing come from? From The Presence of The Lord! A Refreshing implies Restoration and Reinvigoration! Jesus by way of The Holy Spirit is simply Refreshing, Reinvigorating His Church made up of His People! This is true Revival. Now with the help of The Holy Spirit, we take this to the world!!! Amen!!!

Finally, 2 Chronicles 7:14, "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." NKJV.

God Bless All of You, I love you,
Peter Larocque
peterlarocque@hotmail.com ◊

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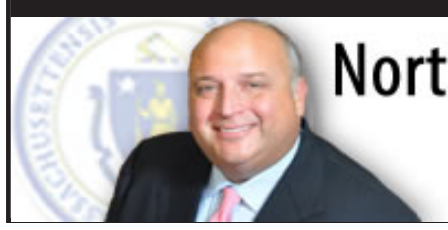

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Balzotti Global Construction LLC, Yanping Tang, $1,750,000, 7 Rattlesnake Hill Rd

Philip Corey Farmer, Eric Schnake & Cecilia Pagani, $1,570,000, 378 Salem St

Lindon & Deborah Robertson, Dunwei Wang & Wei Liu & Shuang Wang, $1,500,000, 3 Avella Cir

Steven D Nguyen & Ann Ngo, Mitesh & Dimple Patel, $880,000, 20 Walnut Ave

ECCE Real Estate LLC, 15 Boxcar LLC, $875,000, 15 Railroad St

Marc R & Elisabeth A Schwartz, 36 Ballardvale LLC, $800,000, 36 Ballardvale Rd

Michael Charles Galatis Tr & Christine Marie Galatis Tr & Galatis Realty Trust, Vast Stratford LLC, $740,000, 4 Stratford Rd

Signature Page Investments LLC & Stellson LLC , James B Conner, $675,000, 51-53 Elm St Unit 51

Signature Page Investments LLC & Stellson LLC, Michael N Levitz, $665,000, 51-53 Elm St Unit 53

Lawrence General Hospital, Richard J & Marilyn A Santagati, $649,700, 13 Muirfield Cir Unit 2-4

J David Davis, Eriberto Garcia, $450,000, 186 Elm St

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Fernando & Yocasta Lara, Genry A Dilone, $780,000, 567 Haverhill St

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Maria Mercado, Abrahan Sanchez Pena & Winston A Perez & Hector L Gonzalez, $660K, 115-117 Woodland St

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Jose L Reyes Jr , Lisbery J Ramirez, $650,000, 185 Willow St

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Doris Pujols, Iscania V Diaz De Cabrera & Iverson Emiel Cabrera Diaz & Nayelle Rivas Urena , $520,000, 20 North Boylston St

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Jasmine MH Whitney & Yvonne Castellon, Oscar N Sagastume Martinez & Maria Castillo, $460K, 26 Durso Ave

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Charlie Luna, Josefina Garcia Vazques, $413,500, 42 Shattuck St

Claire A Wood, 3JO Property Management Inc, $380,000, 65 Exeter St

Gina M Guglielmi, Keerthana Dhananjayan & Michael A Cornelison, $340,000, 3 Woodland St Unit 7

Marie Ann Sapienza, Manuel Zapata, $325,000, 166 Marston St

Joseph J Musumarra Tr & John J Musumarra Tr & Lawrence Malco Realty Trust/Malco Nominee Trust, John J & Jessica Musumarra, $300,000, 32 Shattuck St

Jason Campbell, Thomas J Couture Jr, $120,000, 521 Lowell St/260 Ames St

Karen McCann DiFruscia Tr & Marc A DiFruscia Tr & D & D Realty Trust, Samuel Pierre Jr & Elanor Rosario, $30,000, 158 South Broadway

METHUEN

Toll Ma Land III LP, Ana Lorena Flores, $795,563, 15 Cardinal Rd Unit 174

615B Prospect LLC, Gregory A & Rebeca M Boschetti, $790,000, 607 Prospect St

Toll MA Land III LP, Robert Stewart Fiske & Rulian Weng Fiske, $784,949, 11 Cardinal Rd Unit 175

Nicolas Branchina Tr & 328-330 Merrimack Street Trust, Elie Rechdan, $730,000, 328-330 Merrimack St

Susan J Davis, Lois J & Timothy W Kelly Trs & Lois J Kelly Revocable Trust 2014, $726,000, 79 Pine Tree Dr Unit 70

Jovanny Marte & Nathalie Lora, Bisner Pierre & Veronica Wilkins Pierre, $685,000, 15 Annis St

Erick Alfred Eugenio Olsen Trust & Erick Alfred Eugenio Olsen Tr & Diane Lesley Davies Tr & Diane Lesley Davies Trust, Joshua Patten & Emily Korb, $649,900, 521 Lowell St

Anne Costello & William McNeice, Frederick & Linda Wijnen-Riems, $648,000, 19 Herrick Dr Unit 95

Frederick R & Linda M Wijinen-Riems, Sarah Diamond & Joshua Markham Harding, $615,000, 15 Butternut Ln

David G Bennett, Alicia Lopez Merida, $590,000, 53 Riverview Ave

Right Choice Credit LLC, Jason Erwin & Matthew Scanlon, $575,000, 8 Pine Grove Ave

Springwell Properties LLC, Corey & Deanna Ashley Howard, $570,000, 204 Pelham St

Lynn Lindtveit & Liv Lindtveit, Yeimi Altagracia Sandoval & Ruben Dario Tineo, $552,000, 75 Cochrane Cir

Abraham Ortega & Sonia Guzman , Melissa S Marrocco, $525,000, 12 Queen Ave

Roy D Moesta II & Joyce M Moesta/ Joyce M Bryant , Rafaela Tocafundo, $500,000, 26 Keach St

Amanda L Quellette Tr & 43 Cochrane Circle Realty Trust, Braham Perez, $467,000, 43 Cochrane Cir

Andy Keudy De Los Santos/Andy Keudy Delos Santos, Katherine Redmond & William Wheaton, $450,000, 13 Gleason St

DCR Development LLC, Dora Visajel & Catherine Ripalda Visajel, $450,000, 7 Jane Rd

Annie Marin Lopez, Justin Viseth Pen & Madeline Narra Pen, $441,500, 3 Arthur St

Nicholas J & Heather L Woods, Maritza Melendez, $427,000, 36 Josephine Ave

Susan M Watson, Beni & Tania Kashambala, $425,000, 68 Arthur St

Eric & Kayla McGuerty, Francesco & Janice Lunardi, $415,000, 3 East Brook Pl

Taylor J Healey & Patrick Murphy, Elizabeth Murphy Roche, $385,000, 1 Riverview Blv Unit 1-102

Natalya Kuznetsova/Natalya O Kuznetzova, Thomas Morgan III, $380,000, 1 Riverview Blv Unit 3-210

Paul J Scenna, Fatiha Guejjim, $350,000, 21 Hampshire Rd Unit 21-309

Rosalie M Mirabella & Veronica Richards & Victoria Szmyt & Jacqueline Szmyt, Bruno Ricardo Dummond Parreiras & Evellyn Oliveira Lima, $270,000, 945 Riverside Dr Unit 4C

Cheryl Jarrett/Cheryl Valcourt, James Dunn & Emily Therrien, $266,000, 7 Merrimack St

Nayad Abrahamian Tr & Abracadabra Trust, Rechdan 20 Danbury Dr Methuen LLC, $199,900, 20 Danbury Dr Unit 20

William M Kannan Sr, LLB Construction Inc, $185,000, 386 Oak St

Nayad Abrahamian Tr & Abracadabra Trust , Rechdan 20 Danbury Dr Methuen LLC, $170,000, 50 Danbury Dr Unit 50-11

NORTH ANDOVER

Andrew B Lingel Tr & United Realty Trust , 165 Flagship LLC, $4,650,000, 165 Flagship Dr

Peter E Graziani Tr & 61 Water Street North Andover Trust, Michael Craven Tr & Hanover Realty Trust , $2,100,000, 61-67 Water St

Peter E Graziani Tr & 19-29 East Water Realty Trust, Michael Craven Tr & Hanover Realty Trust , $1,300,000, 19-29 East Water St

Nicholas Bianchi-Coppola & Jill M Nadeau, Peter & Ashley Ewas, $950,000, 122 Abbott St

Philip & Miroslawa Puglisi, Ellen Pishenin Tr & Ellen Pishenin Revocable Trust , $825,000, 79 Cortland Dr Unit 28

William M Jr & Sandra Melvin, Dong Won Kim Tr & Juyun Julie Kim Tr & 225-227 Main Street North Andover Realty Trust, $780,000, 225 Main St

Northeast Properties & Investments LLC, John Reppenhagen & Caitlin Kane, $710,000, 405 Main St

Beverly A Spicer, Robert A & Judith C Sadacca Trs & Sadacca Family Holding Trust, $582,500, 111 Millpond

Edward Chang & Heeyeong Jung, Joao J Costa & Lisa J Costa & Maria A Costa, $542,000, 37 Second St Unit 2

IMA Renovations LLC, Douglas E Gordon & Nancy Hunter, $519,000, 140 Water St Unit 1

Shahawna Kim , Justyne & Shane Begin, $518,000, 85 Autran Ave Unit L

Linda D Dulski, Ronald D Wiltshire Jr, $485,000, 14 Camden St

J&P Realty Trust & James R Lafond Tr & Peter J Lafond Tr, Alexander J Lebruto & Anne H Lafond, $417,000, 321 Osgood St

Pamela L Murphy Tr & Catherine E Burke Est, Mark J Fournier, $415,000, 4 Harvest Dr Unit 204

Peter P Devlin & Arlene Ann Curran/ Arlene Curran Devlin, Michelle Caouette, $415,000, 190 Chickering Rd Unit 208D

Nancy Hunter, Xiaopu Jin, $400,000, 180 Chickering Rd Unit 108C

Cynthia Vocell-Henderson Tr & Markee Family Trust, Alexandra Montalvo, $335,000, 148 Main St Unit A410

Stephen D Cotter & Sonya Litalien, Irene N Mwangi, $310,000, 148 Main St Unit K122

Thomas C Chase, Elizabeth Hanley, $305,000, 4 Fernview Ave Unit 4FV-2

Karen Spencer, Matthew C Novak, $302,000, 148 Main St Unit A218

Gail Hinchey, Pelino & Theresa Campea, $240,000, 6C Kingston St Unit 125

Mia A DiMattia/Mia A Defilippis, Adam Richard Nau, $240,000, 52 Fernview Ave Unit 8

Maragret Raso, Frank J Composto, $225,000, 78C Jefferson St Unit 52

Deutsche Bank National Trust Co Tr, Sophea Sou Krauss, $148,438, 180 Chickering Rd Unit 307 C

Jennifer Vieria Tr/Jennifer Thornley Tr & Elaine E Thornley Tr & H&E Realty and Family Trust/ H&E Trust , Brian P & Kelly L Cheslofska, $35,000, 53 Middlesex St

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